UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1996/869
23 October 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 23 OCTOBER 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF RWANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to forward herewith a short synopsis of the background and history of the current events which have led to the crisis in eastern Zaire.

THE SYNOPSIS OF A CRISIS

PART I. NORTH KIVU

November 1884-February 1885	The Berlin Conference on the demarcation of the African Continent.
1886	Rwanda became a German colony.
1910	Belgium, Germany and Great Britain sign a treaty to redraw the boundaries of their colonies. Thus populations of parts of Rwanda, namely Idjwi island, the Masisi and Rutshuru areas, etc., became part of Belgian Congo.
1916	Rwanda and Burundi became a trusteeship of the League of Nations under Belgium.
1923	The beginning of forced labour migration. Kinyarwanda-speaking populations were taken to work in the colonial plantations in Belgian Congo. The forced migration continued up to 1950s. The Belgian Administration granted colonial citizenship to these migrant workers as citizens of Belgian Congo.
1971	Former Congo-Leopoldville becomes Zaire.

1981	Zaire passes legislation which "denationalized" its citizens. Article 4 of the legislation denies citizenship to people who were not of Zaire ancestry prior to 1885 or had not been in Zaire prior to that date. In other words, they denied citizenship to those Zairians who had become Zairians by virtue of the redrawing of colonial boundaries in Berlin in 1885 (or 100 years ago!).
1982	Ex-President Habyarimana of Rwanda helped to fund the Magrivi Association of farmers in eastern Zaire.
February 1994-1996	Zairian authorities started to target and exterminate the denationalized Banyamurenge Zairians of Tutsi origin of southern Kivu.
April-July 1994	Execution of the Rwanda Genocide Plan in which more than 1 million Tutsis and Hutu sympathizers were wiped out in 98 days with brutal efficiency. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) peacekeeping forces withdraw from Rwanda.
14 July 1994	Fall of Kigali under the forces of the Rwandese Patriotic Front, which stopped the genocide. The militia, the former Rwanda Government Army and their political leadership trap 2 million Rwandans in eastern Zaire. They were helped to settle amidst the Kinyarwanda-speaking Zairian population of the same "ethnic" composition and language as those in Rwanda.
12 May 1996	A monastery in Mokoto was attacked and 300 Kinyarwanda-speaking Zairians of Tutsi origin were killed inside the monastery. Destruction of their homes, slaughter of their cattle, rape and systematic killing was launched.

Note:

(a) It is very important to point out that between 1886 and 1996, or for 100 years, Zairians of all ethnic compositions had never thought about the ethnic cleansing of their Kinyarwanda-speaking Zairians. The plan to exterminate was hatched recently.

(b) It all started following the implantation of ethnic hatred and genocide by the former Rwanda militia, Interahamwe and elements of the former

army and its political leadership when they moved to Zaire after committing genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

(c) Recent events in eastern Zaire are not accidental. Zaire's denationalization of its own citizens in 1981 constitutes a dangerous precedent which will have wider implications throughout the African continent.

PART II. SOUTH KIVU

By 1543	The Banyamurenge were already settled in the south-eastern region of Zaire (four and a half centuries ago). They happened to be of Tutsi origin. They settled in the fertile Rusizi valley and the high plateau of the Mitumba mountains.
July/August 1996	The events of North Kivu as described under Part I above spread to South Kivu. The former militia, elements of the former Rwandese army together with their political leadership had already sown the seeds of hatred and genocide in this area.
23 August 1996	Mr. Kyembo Wa Lumuna, Governor of South Kivu Province, visited Minenbwe, the heartland of the Banyamurenge. He made a statement calling on the Banyamurenge to stop fighting the Zaire Government. Yet there was no fighting at all. The statement was an excuse for the reconnaissance tour of the area. Three Army colonels and five majors were in his delegation.
By the end of August 1996	Detachments of the Zairian Army, exiled Rwandan military and Interahamwe militia embarked on killing and extermination of the Banyamurenge.
13 September 1996	The Zaire Government made a statement accusing neighbouring countries and the United Nations.
11 October 1996	The United Nations denounced the accusations of UNHCR involvement.

PART III. HAS THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY BEEN WARNED ABOUT THE IMPENDING CRISIS?

January 1996	The preliminary report of the International Commission of Inquiry on the sale of arms and related matériel in the Great Lakes region warned of the impending crisis in the area.

April 1996	The Security Council adopted resolution 1053 (1996) of 23 April 1996 which recognized that there were destabilizing military training camps in eastern Zaire.
June 1996	Amnesty International reported on 14 June 1996 about the ethnic cleansing in eastern Zaire (Masisi) and the responsibility of the Zaire Government in the matter. Amnesty International warned of the explosive nature of the crisis.
8 June 1996	The United States Committee on Refugees produced chilling evidence of continued ethnic cleansing of Kinyarwanda-speaking Zairians in eastern Zaire and the complicity of the Zairian Army and former Rwanda Government Army as well as its militia.
June 1996	The contents of the above-mentioned reports were brought to the attention of the Security Council.

Whereas the current situation in eastern Zaire is purely internal, the international community cannot remain aloof without seeking solutions aimed at halting the intensification of ethnic cleansing and genocide in eastern Zaire.

In view of the crisis in eastern Zaire, the Government of Rwanda has just made an urgent appeal to all Rwandan refugees to return to Rwanda instead of continuing to stay in refugee camps and in other scattered places. The Government of Rwanda would like to appeal to the international community to assist in the repatriation of the Rwandan refugees who are trapped in the Zairian crisis.

I should be grateful if you could circulate the text of the present letter as a document of the Secretary-General.

(Signed) Gideon KAYINAMURA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of
Rwanda to the United Nations